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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 000201

SIPDIS

FOR EUR/WE, ALSO FOR WHA/AND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/24/2019

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SUBJECT: CHARGE'S FEBRUARY 24, 2009, MEETING WITH SPANISH  
MOD SECRETARY GENERAL FOR POLICY LUIS CUESTA

REF: A. STATE 14097

[1](#)B. STATE 15623

[1](#)C. STATE 15959

[1](#)D. STATE 15100

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires Arnold A. Chacon, Reasons 1.4(b),(d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The CDA met February 24, 2009, with MOD Secretary General for Policy Luis Cuesta. They discussed the way forward in Afghanistan, the possibility that Colombian troops would join the Spanish there, Manas, Spanish interest in a drawdown in KFOR, the Agreement on Defense Cooperation, and MOD Chacon's tentative meeting with SECDEF in Washington. End summary.

Afghanistan - The Way Forward  
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[1](#)2. (C) Offering his readout on the NATO defense ministerial in Krakow, Cuesta described the U.S. decision to send 17,000 more troops to Afghanistan as a breath of oxygen. He noted the messages received in Krakow regarding the need to support the August elections as well as the decisions of Germany and Italy to send additional troops. He said the Spanish position, as expressed in the Bucharest political-military action plan, was that what was needed was acceleration of Afghanization, more reconstruction, help from Afghanistan's neighbors, and dialogue not just with the central government in Kabul, but with the provincial and local governments. (He noted parenthetically that in its effort to move its Qala-i-Naw PRT to a location near the airport, Spain was finding it useful to negotiate via the local council of elders, thus hopefully avoiding the problems the Norwegians had a couple of years ago when they negotiated property rights for a similar move via the central government and ended up facing some angry landowners.) Cuesta also mentioned the need for better coordination between ISAF and OEF and the importance of reducing civilian casualties. He said Spain hoped all these elements would have a place in the new U.S. strategy. Nevertheless, he said Spain was waiting to see the result of the U.S. review and would then consider what Spain's value-added could be. He said no decisions had yet been taken on a possible troop increase to support the elections and opined that as far as permanent troop increase, Spain was likely to focus any additional contribution on training (in this regard he mentioned the possibility of another OMLT for training of the ANA company Spain has agreed to support in Qala-i-Naw).

[1](#)3. (C) As he did repeatedly during this meeting and drawing on refels a, b, and c, the CDA stressed that the U.S. welcomed Spain's views on the way forward in Afghanistan and that now was the time to make those views known, either in Madrid, Brussels, Washington, or all three. He noted that

the Secretary and FM Moratinos were scheduled to meet that day in Washington and added the NATO FMs' meeting in early March would provide another opportunity for Spain to make its views known at the highest levels. The CDA also stressed that regardless of the outcome of the U.S. strategic review, there were a number of things that needed to be done such as providing election support, expanding the ANA trust fund, and encouraging Pakistan to grapple with the extremist challenge it faced.

Manas

14. (C) Cuesta mentioned concern over Manas, noting the importance of the base for Spain's effort in Afghanistan and saying Spain hoped to join the U.S. wherever it ended up. He suggested Spain would be willing to weigh in with potential host nations in the region if the U.S. wished.

Colombia and ISAF

15. (C) The CDA asked about the prospect of Colombian troops joining ISAF, noting the Spanish press had carried the story recently. Cuesta said the project was still in its preliminary stages. He noted the Colombians had sent a letter advising the NATO SYG of their interest, and NATO had agreed in January to accept a Colombian contribution. The Colombians had asked Spain to serve as their sponsor, and Cuesta spoke to VMOD Pinzon ten days ago to let him know Spain was willing to incorporate the Colombians into their forces in Afghanistan. However, Spain was now waiting for

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Colombia to take the next steps, which Cuesta said would be to formally confirm they wanted to send forces and advise on a schedule for doing so and then enter into an MOU with Spain for their sponsorship (Cuesta said Spain had followed a similar process with El Salvador and Honduras for troops those countries were sending to Lebanon). Cuesta said that once these steps were accomplished Spain could begin working in NATO with SACEUR, et al. on the details. Cuesta emphasized that Spain would appreciate U.S. assistance in transport (both to Spain for training and then to Afghanistan), housing, equipment, and per diem for the Colombians. He said the total number would probably be between 120-150 (three platoons), and the Colombians had not yet advised what sorts of troops they would send, although he mentioned the possibility of engineers, infantry, and special forces. Overall, he made it clear he regarded the ball as being in the Colombian court.

KFOR

16. (C) Asked about remarks by MOD Chacon in Krakow regarding a drawdown of KFOR, Cuesta said that one year after Kosovo's declaration of independence, the situation appeared stable. EULEX had taken over from UNMIK, and NATO was now relegated to the third tier in terms of providing security. He said NATO's focus appeared to be shifting to nation-building projects that Spain, given its opposition to Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, could not support. He said that given Spain's budget problems and the potential need for troops elsewhere (he mentioned Bosnia) it would be useful if the Spanish troops deployed in KFOR could be drawn down.

Agreement on Defense Cooperation

17. (C) Drawing on ref d, the CDA explained that the U.S. was interested in any suggestions the Spanish might have regarding improvements to the ADC, but that presenting it to the U.S. Senate was not on the table. Cuesta expressed understanding and said the GOS had formed a working group in

late January. He said they needed a few more weeks before offering any suggestions, but they hoped to present the Spanish position by mid-year and then wrap up negotiations in the second half of 2009. He stressed that Spain wanted the process of renewal to be discreet and private. Spain wanted to avoid public discussion of the issue and present a renewed ADC to the public as an accomplished fact.

Meeting with SECDEF  
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18. (C) Cuesta noted the MOD was still very interested in a meeting with SECDEF in Washington and was waiting for word from the U.S. on whether the proposed dates of June 29 or 30 or July 1, 2, or 3 will work.

Comment  
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19. (C) On Afghanistan, Cuesta was reflecting a wait and see approach to the U.S. strategic review. We stressed that the time for Spain to make its views known was now. He also signaled that any additional contribution from Spain was likely to focus on training. He noted with approbation VP Biden's remarks in Munich which he said suggested the U.S. would ask allies not just for troops but for what they could best provide. On the ADC, our message regarding submission to the Senate appears to have gotten through.

CHACON